

Trading Post

OBJECTIVE

To create a central location for youth to exchange messages to each other

MATERIALS

- Construction Paper in shades of black and brown (People Colors® Craft Paper)
- Regular construction Paper
- Glue sticks
- Markers
- 6.5 x 9.5 inch envelopes
- A basket with squares of paper and pens

SETUP

Cut the construction paper into four squares, and place each color in its own basket.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Explain** to youth that they will be creating a Trading Post: a place to have fun interactions with each other.
2. **Distribute** the envelopes to each participant.
3. Ask them to **turn** the envelope to the front side, and write their names in large letters.
4. Now have them **turn** their envelopes around to the back, so that the opening flap is facing you as the “canvas” they work on.
5. Have participants **write** their names again in small but visible letters at the bottom of their envelope.
6. Ask youth to **create a snapshot** of their face using only ripped pieces of construction paper in the shades of black and brown, leaving their names visible.
7. **Explain** that they should only create their face, and not their whole bodies.
8. When participants are close to done with their faces **invite** participants to add one accent color to their snapshot.
9. Have each participant **share** their envelope, and share one thing about themselves using this prompt:
“If you really knew me you would know ...”
10. **Pin** each participant’s envelope onto a tri-fold board labeled COMMUNITY TRADING POST at the top.
11. **Distribute** slips of paper and pens to each participant.
12. Explain to participants they will have **15 minutes to write at least three notes** to people in their group, appreciating something they learned about them in the opening circle. Ask participants to write the name of the recipient on one side, and their note on the other side of the paper, so that if a note falls out of an envelope it can be replaced in its rightful box
13. **Explain** that the basket of paper and pens will be available to participants at specific times in the day for them to write notes to each other.
14. At a designated time each week (such as Fridays, or on early release days), have a participant serve as the **postal worker** and distribute each participants’ envelope to them to read their mail, then collect the empty envelopes to replace on the trading post.
15. All the **staff** in the program should make an envelope as well, so participants can write to you.
16. Each week, make sure you **write notes** to all the participants at least once.



Trading Post, continued

DEBRIEF

- **What agreements should we make to ensure that all the notes people write to each other are respectful and uphold our community agreements?**
- **What consequences should be put in place if someone makes a poor choice?**
- **This is an activity where one person making a bad choice will impact the entire group, because if one person makes it less safe, it will make everyone feel less safe. What should we do to ensure no one makes a bad choice?**

DIAL IT DOWN

- Provide participants with googly eyes to add to their completed collage—this will make them less abstract!
- Pre-type each participants' name on a label and distribute to participants to stick on their envelope or pre-write their name on the bottom of the canvas side of the envelope—this will ensure people can send notes to the right person.
- Have participants draw a picture and write their name on the envelope instead of the face.
- Instead of writing notes, have participants draw pictures to express friendship, sharing, love, or respect to each other.